Skills Nova Scotia
Action Plan 2003–2004

NOVA SCOTIA

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Action Plan 2003–2004

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Message from the Premier

Office of
the Premier

The *Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2003–2004* demonstrates government's dedication and commitment to a thriving and vibrant Nova Scotia. This plan advances innovative strategies that will help Nova Scotians prosper in a competitive labour force.

An important step this year was the establishment of the Partners Advisory Council (PAC) on Workforce Skills. The PAC will provide advice and guidance on current skill development and labour market issues, and on future trends.

In addition to the creation of the PAC, Nova Scotia has signed an agreement with the Association of Industry Sector Councils and Human Resources Development Canada to work together in the area of human resource planning and development.

One of the messages that was communicated very clearly during public consultations was the need for better access to career development resources and services. In September 2003, a Career Development Symposium was held as a first step in addressing this concern. Stakeholders from the public school system, post-secondary education and training providers, business and labour, career development practitioners, consumers, and the federal and provincial governments came together to discuss how to work more effectively to ensure that Nova Scotians have access to high quality career development services.

The guiding principles of the Skills Nova Scotia Framework highlight the importance of better access and supports for groups who are under-represented in the workforce. This *Action Plan 2003–2004* details a number of initiatives that work toward this goal. One example is One Journey—Work and Learn. This initiative will help income assistance recipients access essential skills education at a work site—an experience that could lead to employment upon successful completion of the program.

Here in Nova Scotia, we have the framework in place for a successful provincial skills agenda. Our partners from across government, business, labour, industry, education and training providers, and communities continue to work together to develop a globally competitive workforce, right here at home.

John Hamm

John F. Hamm
Premier of Nova Scotia

Message from the Minister of Education

Office of
the Minister
of Education

We are working to *create a world-class workforce ready to meet the demands of today and the promise of tomorrow*. As the co-ordinating lead for the provincial skills agenda, the Department of Education works with business, labour, education and training providers, communities, and across government to advance the vision of the Skills Nova Scotia Framework.

The *Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2003–2004* highlights specific programs, services, and initiatives that will position Nova Scotia as a competitive market nationally, and globally. In some cases, the action items build on existing strengths, in others, we have identified new initiatives that will build the skills, supports, and systems we need for future success.

We are learning to work more effectively with industry to identify challenges and opportunities in the Nova Scotia labour force and are creating innovative solutions to existing or impending skills gaps. A primary focus of our efforts is the development of high quality labour market information to ensure that Nova Scotians know where the opportunities are and have access to the education and training they require to get there.

A review of the *Action Plan 2003–2004* shows that our efforts benefit the future and the existing workforce. From Read to Me!, a program which supports early literacy, to the Workplace Education Initiative, a program which helps employed Nova Scotians develop the essential skills required for work. The *Action Plan 2003–2004* underscores the link between the social and economic prosperity of the province; and that of individual Nova Scotians.

We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that there are opportunities for Nova Scotians to be successful in our labour market, and that Skills Nova Scotia remains a high priority for our government.

Jamie Muir

Jamie Muir
Minister of Education

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Introduction

The following goals and objectives are from the *Skills Nova Scotia Framework and 2002–2003 Action Plan*.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Meet the skill needs of Nova Scotia's labour market

Objectives

1. Research, develop, and distribute high-quality labour market information
2. Co-ordinate targeted initiatives that satisfy emerging skill needs
3. Work to enhance and improve the apprenticeship system in Nova Scotia
4. Improve mobility of skilled workers within Canada
5. Improve Nova Scotia's competitive edge in attracting and retaining highly skilled international workers
6. Design and implement a labour policy to promote safe and healthy work environments, fair employment standards, and stable labour-management relations
7. Improve opportunities for youth to develop the leadership skills required for successful labour market participation

Goal 2: Provide better labour market access and supports to Nova Scotians

Objectives

1. Provide career- and employment-related services to Nova Scotians to help them develop their skills and find sustainable jobs
2. Assist low-income Nova Scotians, including income assistance recipients, to access education and training
3. Promote equity, fairness, and diversity throughout labour market programs and services offered in Nova Scotia
4. Develop and implement prior-learning assessment and recognition processes and tools

Goal 3: Strengthen Nova Scotia's system of lifelong learning opportunities

Objectives

1. Increase the opportunities for Nova Scotia's children to develop a curiosity and ability to learn before entering Nova Scotia's education system
2. Improve the core skills of children in Nova Scotia's education system
3. Expand co-operative and work experience opportunities for students in Nova Scotia's secondary education system
4. Increase the opportunities for Nova Scotians to access adult basic education
5. Make education and training more relevant to the emerging skill needs of the learners and employers
6. Increase the post-secondary education and training system's capacity to respond to emerging labour market needs
7. Promote lifelong learning through the development of a learning culture

Progress to Date

In 2002, the Province of Nova Scotia released the *Skills Nova Scotia Framework and 2002–2003 Action Plan*. The document outlines the goals and objectives set by government to prepare Nova Scotia's workforce to succeed in the labour market and contribute to the growing economy. The *Skills Nova Scotia Annual Progress Report 2002–2003* was released in the late spring. It described the short-term achievements leading toward the continued development of a skilled and knowledgeable workforce in Nova Scotia. Activities undertaken in 2002–2003 include new apprenticeship legislation, the creation of targeted initiatives to address current and impending skills shortages, increased capacity to create labour market information, the development of a co-ordinated federal-provincial skills and learning partnership, and the creation of an operational structure for Skills Nova Scotia.

Planning for the Future

The *Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2003–2004* outlines the activities that the government is undertaking during this fiscal year to advance innovative and timely strategies that will help Nova Scotians continue to meet the challenges of an aging workforce, rapid technological change, globalization, the out-migration of youth, and the imbalance of skilled workers. These activities have been identified through the provincial Labour Force Planning Committee and through partnerships with business, labour, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and the federal government.

Highlights in 2003–2004

The ability of the government, employers, education and training institutions, communities, and Nova Scotians to contribute to labour market development hinges on our capacity to work together to identify labour market demands, engage the complete range of diverse groups in labour market activities, and provide the right balance of education and training to satisfy emerging demands with qualified workers.

Highlights of labour market activities to be undertaken in 2003–2004 include the following:

Access to High Quality Labour Market Information

To ensure that Nova Scotians are able to meet the skill needs of our labour market, all labour market participants—individuals, communities, employers, education and training institutions, and governments—must have access to accurate, timely, and relevant local labour market information to help them make effective decisions.

Labour market information is needed by individuals to make career decisions; by employers to plan for their human resource needs; by education and training institutions to make programming and curriculum decisions; and by government to develop labour market policies, investments, programs, and services.

The development of useful information requires strategic investment and co-ordination among employers, education and training institutions, communities, and governments. In 2003–2004, a number of initiatives are contributing to the development of better labour market information. They include the development of a memorandum of understanding between the provincial government, federal government, and nine industry sector councils to develop a better understanding of labour market supply and demand, the hosting of the Nova Scotia Petroleum Skills Forum, and the updating of the *Nova Scotia Business Climate Index*.

Development of Strategic Sectoral Initiatives

Responding to the labour market demand identified through labour market information and by industry, sometimes requires timely responses to short-term shortages. The continued implementation of Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy and the work under the Construction Trades Skill Development Initiative are just two of the strategic initiatives highlighted in this action plan that will help Nova Scotians respond to our emerging labour market challenges.

Improved Labour Market Access and Supports

For Nova Scotia to have a well-balanced workforce, we need to provide better labour market access and supports for all Nova Scotians. Groups of people who are under-represented in the workforce such as women and those with disabilities must be able to access labour market opportunities.

The development of labour market access and supports requires strategic investment and co-ordination among employers, education and training institutions, and governments. In 2003–2004, a number of initiatives will contribute to accessibility of the labour market. They include the development of a memoranda of understanding with post-secondary institutions around a common standard of delivery for students with disabilities and the identification of opportunities, the development of One Journey—Work and Learn, and strategies to address issues collaboratively through the Round Table on Women's Economic Security.

Creation of a Comprehensive Career Development Service for Nova Scotia

Access to career development information and guidance is an issue that has been identified as a long-term objective. In a well-functioning labour market, workers, students, and the unemployed are able to access career development, education, and employment counselling to help them plot out career paths that lead to gainful employment and self-fulfilment. Work toward the development of a continuum of career development services will be undertaken in 2003–2004.

Activities include a provincial inventory project to identify the existing career development service providers and a provincial symposium to create a career development framework for Nova Scotians.

Increased Capacity to Provide Labour Market Supports to Immigrants

The attraction and retention of immigrants will play an important role in the continued growth of our labour market. The provision of a complete continuum of labour market supports will help us attract immigrants with the skills and knowledge needed to fill skills gaps. An example of an activity initiated in 2003–2004 to make Nova Scotia a desired destination among immigrants is the Provincial Nominee Program.

Increased Investment in Education and Training

A well-balanced labour market depends upon a cross-section of post-secondary education and training opportunities to meet the emerging labour force demands. The government will continue to enhance its support to community colleges and apprenticeship to ensure that Nova Scotians are able to access a full range of post-secondary opportunities. These initiatives include investing in phase one of the $125 million Nova Scotia Community College expansion and increasing the annual training opportunities available to apprentices.

Our mission—building Nova Scotia's economy and quality of life through education and innovation—reflects our commitment to helping Nova Scotians acquire the sophisticated knowledge and skills needed for success in the modern labour market. In an increasingly knowledge-based economy, lifelong learning has become a prerequisite for occupational and personal development. In response to this imperative, we have recently embarked on an exciting new phase in the college's development that will provide greater access to applied learning opportunities throughout the province. The Government of Nova Scotia's college expansion announcement will increase NSCC capacity by 2500 students as well as improve campus infrastructure through an investment of $123 million.

Ray Ivany
President, NSCC

Continuing Consultation

Two key components of future Skills Nova Scotia consultations are the Partners' Advisory Council on Workforce Skills (PAC) and the Premier's Forum.

The PAC was formed in the summer of 2003 and consists of individuals with experience and expertise in various aspects of labour market skill development. The PAC provides advice to the Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister's Committee on Skills regarding emerging labour market skill development challenges and opportunities and possible actions to address them. The PAC will help plan the forum which will convene in 2003–2004. It will provide an opportunity for a wide range of labour market partners to discuss common issues and to seek solutions and priorities for action in 2004–2005.

By co-ordinating our efforts through the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework, the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia are providing a more strategic and effective response to the labour market needs and workforce requirements of Nova Scotians.

Cathy Drummond
Director General
Human Resources Development Canada
Nova Scotia Region

Working Together

The province and the federal government are continuing to work together to achieve our common skills and learning priorities. Two initiatives, the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework(CNSSLF) and the Canada–Nova Scotia Innovations Team have been working together to ensure that Nova Scotia has the environment and workforce necessary for innovation and growth.

The CNSSLF priorities are

- Apprenticeship, Learning, and Earning
- Employability, Career Development, and Employment Counselling
- Immigration
- Labour Market Information

The Canada–Nova Scotia Protocol on Youth Employment is also implemented under the CNSSLF.

The Canada–Nova Scotia Innovations Team priorities are

- Understanding Innovation
- Innovation Environment
- Knowledge Performance (Infrastructure)
- Strengthening Communities
- Skills–Highly Qualified People

Action Plan 2003–2004

Goal 1: Meet the skill needs of Nova Scotia's labour market

The capacity to respond to emerging skill needs will be the key component to Nova Scotia's competitiveness. The more adaptive, responsive, and flexible that our labour force and skills development practices become, the more competitive Nova Scotia's labour market will be.

Objective 1: Research, develop, and distribute high quality labour market information

Highlights of Activities Underway

- publishing 8th edition of *Career Options: An Occupational Handbook for Nova Scotians* and *Career Options: A Guide to Nova Scotia's Changing Labour Market*
- participating in a study by the Atlantic Home Building & Renovation Sector Council (AHB&RSC) of construction worker shortages and surpluses in Nova Scotia
- participating in the HRDC-funded study of health human resources in Nova Scotia that creates occupational profiles of approximately 30 health professions (It includes detailed demographic information, education and training requirements, and the human resource issues of each occupation.)
- updating and releasing the *2004 Nova Scotia Business Climate Index*, a key measure that compares Nova Scotia's business climate to other Canadian jurisdictions

New Actions

- develop and apply a labour market forecasting methodology to identify occupational and skill imbalances (shortages and surpluses)
- publish a teachers guide to facilitate use of *Career Options* in the schools and a French edition of *Career Options*
- redesign the *Career Options* Web site
- develop (with HRDC NS) 2003–2008 labour market, industrial, and occupational projections for Nova Scotia, based on Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) data
- produce 2003–2008 series of annual labour market outlook publications, including *Labour Market Outlook*, *Industrial Outlook*, and *Occupational Outlook*
- undertake a study with the Construction Trades Skills Development Initiative (CTSDI) to identify actual existing and potential future imbalances in the skilled trades

- conduct a symposium on the Construction Industry in the Atlantic Provinces in partnership with the Council of Atlantic Premiers' Labour Market Information and Skills Working Group and the Atlantic Provinces Consortium of Community Colleges
- facilitate effective collaboration across governments through the Canada/Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework (CNSSLF) to develop labour market information products and services and to undertake research
- identify new opportunities for women in emerging trades/technology occupations in collaboration with key stakeholders

Objective 2: Co-ordinate targeted initiatives that satisfy emerging skill needs

The Skills Nova Scotia Framework provides both the opportunity and commitment for a process of joint planning to find better and more comprehensive solutions to the human resource challenges facing our sectors and all Nova Scotians. Although less than one year old, it is already resulting in more effective and strategic partnering between the AISC and the province in critical areas of labour market information, skills development and credentialing, and the promotion of career opportunities for our young people.

Mary Kenny
AISC, Sector Council

Highlights of Activities Underway

- partnering with key federal departments under the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework (CNSSLF) to implement the Apprenticeship, Earning, and Learning priority work plan
- expanding the human resource strategy for the financial community
- continuing to implement the Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy
- increasing the training for medical laboratory technologists through a joint program between Nova Scotia Community College and New Brunswick Community College
- targeting older workers (aged 55–64) through the Older Worker Pilot Project Initiative, in partnership with the federal government, to reintegrate displaced older workers into sustainable employment or maintain employment of older workers threatened with displacement
- continuing to support Workforce Adjustment Initiatives such as the Job Transition Centres for the former DEVCO and SYSCO workers to provide career counselling, employment support, and essential skills training
- continuing to address the short- and long-term human resource issues in the construction industry through the Construction Trades Skill Development Initiative, to ensure that Nova Scotia has the skilled workers required to meet the industry's current and future trades skill needs
- implementing the Apprenticeship and Construction Trades Training Partnership to serve as a forum for the industrial/commercial/institutional construction industry, to meet with government and training providers to undertake multi-year planning, to discuss skills training and delivery, and to provide an opportunity to identify issues and find solutions
- providing investment support for skill development workshops in music, craft, and cultural activities
- providing funding to youth organizations involved in skill development such as Halifax Dance Young Company and Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra

- providing support for international marketing of skill development initiatives
- offering skill development and enhancement courses through the Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design
- providing funding through the Anchor Organizations Program to groups like the Gaelic College and the Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia, which offer training and support services to individuals in the cultural sector
- developing a program to provide financial assistance to students to attract prospective skilled workers
- continuing to offer a bursary at Dalhousie University Faculty of Engineering through the Transportation and Public Works Planning for Progress: Employment and Bursary Program and offering a bursary at Nova Scotia Community College
- continuing to address the issues of industry human resource planning and skill development by partnering with sector councils and industry associations

New Actions

- engage public and private sector oil and gas stakeholders from Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces at the Nova Scotia Petroleum Skills Forum in November 2003 to identify sector-specific skills issues facing the region as it develops its petroleum industry
- begin training 25 students at New Brunswick Community College in the Med Lab Tech program and provide bursaries to those who agree to work in Nova Scotia for a period of time
- support the Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Nova Scotia in its development of a sector-wide human resource strategy to address workforce attraction, retention, and skill development issues
- support the development and implementation of the Maritime Forces Atlantic Civilian Workforce Renewal Strategy
- plan a co-ordinated strategy for recruitment and retention of women in trades and technology occupations
- develop outreach programs designed to educate students with the range of skills used in jobs through efforts such as a promotional employment video, job fairs, departmental speakers bureau, and open houses

Objective 3: Work to enhance and improve the apprenticeship system in Nova Scotia

Skills Nova Scotia continues to be a very exciting and important initiative that demonstrates government commitment to meet the skills needs of Nova Scotia's labour market. As a stakeholder in the apprenticeship system, I have witnessed first hand the benefits of the ongoing consultative process between education, business, and labour. The result has been the development and distribution of relevant labour market information allowing Nova Scotians to make informed career decisions.

Steve Vaslet
Chair of Provincial Apprenticeship Board

Highlights of Activities Underway

- exploring the source and supply of resources in the development and delivery of apprenticeship programming
- expanding access to training via alternate delivery
- expanding the Apprenticeship Essential Skills Initiative to provide essential skills and assessment for each new apprentice and trade qualifier
- responding to industry's requests to designate new trades and apply for compulsory certification of a designated trade
- reviewing and refreshing apprenticeship training standards as part of an atlantic apprenticeship initiative

New Actions

- increase annual technical training capacity to 60 percent of active apprentices
- work with education, business, labour, and sector councils to establish a Youth Apprenticeship Program
- design a schedule and undertake a review of trade regulations
- increase the number of Joint Registration Agreements with First Nations communities and other stakeholder communities
- develop a database of employers who can provide a first work term experience for immigrant workers
- investigate the opportunities for upgrading/enhancement training for trade practitioners
- undertake joint marketing initiatives with Skills Canada–Nova Scotia to promote careers in the skilled trades and technologies
- develop an accreditation policy for technical training providers
- hold a forum with key stakeholders to design and implement initiatives for the recruitment and retention of women apprentices

Objective 4: Improve mobility of skilled workers within Canada

Highlights of Activities Underway

- implementing the Labour Mobility Chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade to reduce or remove barriers to the movement of workers within Canada, making it easier for skilled workers to choose where they live and work

- encouraging regulatory bodies to recognize the credentials of workers who have obtained their qualifications in other countries
- enhancing the National Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program for the trades, in partnership with business, industry, and labour

Objective 5: Improve Nova Scotia's competitive edge in attracting and retaining highly skilled international workers

Within three months of completing MISA's New Beginnings Program, over 80% of participants are working in their fields. This successful workforce integration program for newcomers is made possible through the support of the Federal-Provincial Skill Development Agreement, an initiative of Skills Nova Scotia.

Jan Sheppard Kutcher
Employment Services Manager
Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA)

Highlights of Activities Underway

- continuing to support English as a Second Language training programs such as the English for Academic Purposes Pilot Program at Nova Scotia Community College and other community-based education initiatives to assist immigrants who wish to access post-secondary education or workplace opportunities
- signing an articulation agreement with the Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University in China, which will bring as many as 60 Chinese students per year to complete the final two years of their degrees at Nova Scotia Agricultural College
- implementing the Provincial Nominee Program to encourage immigrants to settle in Nova Scotia
- continuing to support the English in the Workplace Program that provides customized language training to employed immigrants
- supporting the occupational specific language training, in partnership with the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre and Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association

New Actions

- engage partners/stakeholders in a strategic planning process to better co-ordinate English as a Second Language programs and related activities for adults
- develop and commence implementation of a provincial multiculturalism strategy in partnership with stakeholders
- support the labour market programs and services for immigrants such as New Beginnings

Objective 6: Design and implement labour policies to promote safe and healthy work environments, fair employment standards, and stable labour-management relations

Highlights of Activities Underway

- conducting research in partnership with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health on the relationship between women's health and well-being, family life, and earning a livelihood through the Healthy Balance Program
- consulting stakeholders and the public to achieve best practices in regulatory management to ensure a fair and safe workplace
- encouraging occupational health and safety training specific to industry
- conducting ongoing reviews of Occupational Health and Safety legislation to meet provisions of proposed sunset clause recommendations of the Red Tape Reduction Task Force, government's legislative agenda, and ongoing program evaluation and review
- transfering responsibility of blaster's certification from the Department of Environment and Labour to the Department of Education
- strengthening the process to support future development of a risk-based model for delivery of occupational health and safety inspection, monitoring, and compliance services
- publishing relevant safety information for the fishing industry
- enforcing the practice of compulsory trades by certified tradespeople through investigations, audits, and education

New Actions

- conduct a survey of Nova Scotians about their paid work and unpaid caregiving; publish the first phase of the research findings; develop knowledge translation strategies; establish a policy research team
- increase activities in the prevention of occupational health and safety accidents and injuries and promote youth health and safety as part of a national initiative agreed to by labour ministries from all jurisdictions in Canada, in partnership with the Workplace Safety and Insurance System agencies
- implement the Workplace Safety and Insurance System strategic plan including implementation of a renewed prevention strategy

- participate in regional and national inter-jurisdictional initiatives to promote health and safety in the workplace, including
  - the Atlantic Action Plan Initiative on Occupational Health and Safety under the auspices of the Council of Atlantic Premiers
  - the Cross-Canada Young Worker Initiative sponsored by the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL). This multi-faceted initiative is designed to address the disproportionate incidence of workplace injuries experienced by young workers—one-third of all work injuries happen to workers aged 15–24

Objective 7: Improve opportunities for youth to develop the leadership skills required for successful labour market participation

The Nova Scotia Skills Framework has taken a progressive step forward in preparing young people for healthy futures. Providing opportunities for young people to learn leadership skills through community building activity holds great promise for young people and communities.

Marc Langlois
HeartWood

The Skills Nova Scotia agenda empowers young people to make smart choices for our future while including us as leaders today. I look forward to watching youth become more and more involved in shaping Nova Scotia's labour market future.

Ryan MacNeil
Co-Chair, Youth Advisory Council

Highlights of Activities Underway

- offering skill development opportunities to youth in care, direct recipients, and dependents of income assistance recipients through the Youth Initiative Program
- investing in youth training organizations such as the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra
- supporting the implementation of the Rural Youth Engagement Strategy
- identifying approaches to support youth leadership through consultations with community and government representatives

New Actions

- undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the Nova Scotia Employment Program for Students
- enter into a partnership with the HeartWood organization and other stakeholders to create the Centre of Excellence for Youth Development as a means of enabling more young Nova Scotians to gain the leadership skills required for labour market and community participation
- undertake research with partners to facilitate the creation of a youth employment strategy and to guide priority setting in 2004–2005 and beyond

Goal 2: Provide better labour market access and supports to Nova Scotians

For Skills Nova Scotia to be successful, it is necessary for the province to co-ordinate programs and services to support Nova Scotians in their career development and employment choices. This includes career and employment guidance counselling, access to education and training, and the promotion of the principles of fairness, equity, and diversity.

Objective 1: Provide career- and employment-related services to Nova Scotians to help them develop their skills and find sustainable jobs

Highlights of Activities Underway

- offering career and job development services to income assistance recipients who are deemed to be appropriate for participation in employability enhancing activities
- promoting public awareness of the variety of career opportunities available in the province's energy sector
- providing recent post-secondary graduates with an opportunity to work with the Government of Nova Scotia and gain valuable experience for up to one year through the Career Starts Internship Program
- providing meaningful and applicable employment opportunities with the Government of Nova Scotia to post-secondary students through co-operative placements
- creating employment opportunities for aboriginal students, racially visible students, students with disabilities, and female students pursuing studies in non-traditional areas through a Summer Employment Diversity Initiative and a Mentorship Program for females

New Actions

- promote an Employment Development Program, a work-based training program designed to provide workplace learning opportunities and foundations for long-term employment for Employment Support Services program participants

Objective 2: Assist low income Nova Scotians, including income assistance recipients, to access education and training

Highlights of Activities Underway

- negotiating the continuation of the Educate to Work Program (formerly known as TEOP) to provide opportunities for income assistance recipients to attend Nova Scotia Community College and Université Sainte-Anne–Collège de l'Acadie
- extending One Journey: Work and Learn to provide income assistance recipients with workplace essential skills education with potential employers
- continuing to provide opportunities for income assistance recipients to access tuition-free programs through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning

Objective 3: Promote equity, fairness, and diversity throughout labour market programs and services offered in Nova Scotia

Highlights of Activities Underway

- developing and implementing a recruitment initiative targeted at students in the public education system with disabilities to improve access to Nova Scotia Community College and Nova Scotia universities
- developing and implementing an approach to meeting the needs of Individual Program Plan students from the public education system when they attend Nova Scotia Community College skills training programs
- developing and marketing memoranda of understanding with Nova Scotia Community College and all universities in the province, with the goal of establishing a common provincial standard for goods and services delivery for any student with a disability attending post-secondary training and a common special-needs policy for all post-secondary training institutes
- extending the memorandum of understanding framework between Nova Scotia Community Col[illegible] and regional school boards to First Nations' schools to support stude[illegible]uccess in post-secondary education
- continuing to provide targeted funding to support adult literacy and essential skills for the Deaf, Acadian, Mi'kmaq, and African-Canadian communities
- supporting the development of additional articulation agreements between post-secondary institutions whereby credits earned at one institution are recognized by another
- continuing to support the Black Business Initiative's business skills training activities including the Business is Jammin program to encourage youth entrepreneurship

- promoting women's education, training, and labour market activity through support for Techsploration, Hypatia, and the Women for Economic Equality Society
- collaborating with government and non-government stakeholders through the Nova Scotia Advisory Council Round Table on Women's Economic Security to share information and identify issues affecting women's access to labour market programs and services and developing opportunities to address these issues
- providing a workplace that is free of discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity to all persons accessing employment positions within the Government of Nova Scotia through implementation of an affirmative action policy
- recognizing the right of Government of Nova Scotia employees to work in an environment free of sexual harassment and any harassment based on the protected characteristics set out in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* through implementing a sexual harassment and no discrimination policy
- prohibiting discrimination against Government of Nova Scotia employees, clients, or job applicants living with or affected by HIV or AIDS through implementation of a HIV/AIDS in the workplace policy
- ensuring reasonable steps are taken to provide services to persons who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing in a fair and non-discriminatory manner through the provision of interpreter services through implementing a government sign language interpreter services policy
- recruiting and referring qualified designated group applications for employment competitions
- providing individual employment counselling to designated group applicants and government employees
- making presentations and conducting workshops on employment opportunities and job search techniques to community organizations
- conducting workshops and seminars for managers in the civil service to create awareness of diversity management, the nature of the affirmative action policy, and their role in implementation
- reviewing employment policies and practices to ensure that any barriers to employment or advancement of persons from designated groups are eliminated
- ensuring that fair hiring practices are followed when filling positions within the Government of Nova Scotia through implementation of a fair hiring policy

New Actions

- extend the Apprenticeship Essential Skills Initiative implemented in partnership with the Membertou Band to other bands in the province
- advise and support the Women for Economic Equality Society and Hypatia in research to identify policy gaps, overlaps, and conflicts affecting rural women's participation in the new economy
- provide ongoing advice and support for the Women's Community Economic Development Network
- provide advice and ongoing support to the Techsploration Steering Committee and the Program Expansion Committee
- prioritize issues affecting the economic security of low income women to identify opportunities and strategies to address these collaboratively through the Round Table on Women's Economic Security

Objective 4: Develop and implement Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) processes and tools

Highlights of Activities Underway

- implementing policies through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning that recognize prior learning that meets the credit requirements of the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults
- providing career/life prior learning assessment portfolio programming to recipients of income assistance using a base of certified practitioners within the Department of Community Services
- improving policies and practices that help manage, recognize, and reward performance of public servants who contributed to government's goals and priorities
- collaborating with various industry groups to provide research and information on the practices and promotion of PLAR

New Actions

- establish a multi-stakeholder committee to develop a continuum of sustainable mechanisms for the delivery of PLAR services
- work with the Province of New Brunswick to co-develop PLAR projects and tools
- develop a process and model based on PLAR to assist Department of Community Services career practitioners with evidencing competencies in relation to the National Standards Guidelines for Career Practitioners
- develop and implement a PLAR process for the new Continuing Care Assistant Certification Program
- articulate the learning acquired through the Apprenticeship Training Program to be recognized for credit towards the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults
- research with other jurisdictions joint projects for essential skills and transferable skills assessment for apprenticeable trades

Goal 3: Strengthen Nova Scotia's system of lifelong learning opportunities

The continued development of a skilled and knowledgeable labour force will require the nurturing of a lifelong learning culture in Nova Scotia. In order to survive and thrive in the new global economy, Nova Scotians must adopt an attitude that learning is a lifelong endeavour that starts with birth and continues through to adulthood. Encouraging positive attitudes toward learning will better prepare them for success in the future.

Objective 1: Increase the opportunities for Nova Scotia's children to develop a curiosity and ability to learn before entering Nova Scotia's education system

The Read to Me! Program is proud to partner with the province to support a culture of lifelong learning, beginning at birth. Together we are working to build the foundation for a skilled and well trained workforce. I believe supporting early literacy is the best possible long-term investment in the health, and prosperity of Nova Scotians.

Dr. Richard Goldbloom
Read to Me!
Halifax Youth Foundation

Highlights of Activities Underway

- continuing co-ordination of the Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund (FLIEF), which funds projects to support parent/child literacy through a partnership between Halifax Youth Foundation, National Literacy Secretariat (HRDC), and the Department of Education
- participating on the Family Literacy Advisory Group for Nova Scotia to develop an action plan for family literacy in the province through a National Literacy Secretariat funded project
- continuing to support story times and programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers where children and parents are introduced to age-appropriate books

New Actions

- increase the province's investment in Read to Me!, a program which provides newborns and families at hospital sites with a book bag that contains materials to promote reading
- expand infant and toddler story times to all regional libraries

Objective 2: Improve the core skills of children in Nova Scotia's education system

Highlights of Activities Underway

- expanding early intervention programs that provide one-on-one support to identify and correct reading problems early
- providing more books in grades Primary to 3
- providing the *Writers in Action Handbook* for all grade 4 students
- providing classroom resources for Writers in Action 5

- providing intensive, ongoing professional development for teachers
- monitoring implementation of new time requirements for mathematics and language arts for grades Primary to 6
- continuing to implement a comprehensive math strategy that will add new programs for both struggling and advanced students and includes activities such as professional development for school-based math leaders from grades Primary through 9, the creation and implementation of ten level teaching guides, *Mathematics: A Teaching Resource*, for grades Primary to 9, and the development of *MathLinks: Grades Primary–3*
- continuing to monitor and support school board/Nova Scotia Community CollegePrep initiatives

New Actions

- provide new resources for mathematics including Homework Baggies for mathematics in the early grades
- implement Active Readers 8 Program that will provide 100,000 more books for grade 8 students and teachers
- pilot *Mathematics Essentials 10* in the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board
- implement *Mathematics 10 Plus* and *Mathematics Foundations Plus*, new course options that provide increased time and support for mathematics learning
- develop, pilot, and implement new courses that focus on labour market needs and opportunities including Community Care 12, Tourism 12, Computer Studies 12, Multimedia 12, Geomatics 12, Agriculture/Agrifood 11, Film and Video Production 12, Food Science 12, and Business Management 12
- developing articulation agreements for a range of senior high courses and Nova Scotia Community College programs

Objective 3: Expand co-operative and work experience opportunities for students in Nova Scotia's secondary education system

Highlights of Activities Underway

- encouraging young people to consider entrepreneurship as a viable employment opportunity through the Youth Entrepreneurship Scholarships (YES) Program
- providing significant opportunities under the Community Access Program (C@P) for students to access entry-level workplace opportunities throughout Nova Scotia
- working with education institutions, business, labour, and sector councils to establish a Youth Apprenticeship Program
- developing articulation agreements for a range of senior high courses and Nova Scotia Community College programs

- leveraging co-op and summer employment opportunities with industry through the Energy Training Program for Students to build sector-specific competencies that will help students find relevant employment in the energy sector upon graduation
- continuing to support co-operative employment placements in not-for-profit organizations and within the public sector

Objective 4: Increase the opportunities for Nova Scotians to access adult basic education

Skills Nova Scotia is an ambitious plan for strengthening the workforce in Nova Scotia and building a successful economy for all. However, it all starts with individuals who have the desire and knowledge to participate. NSSAL and the new credential, the Nova Scotia High School Diploma for Adults support and encourage individuals to grow and achieve so they, too, can participate in the growth of Nova Scotia.

Margie Hopkins
Principal of the Flexible Learning Education Centres, HRSB

Highlights of Activities Underway

- continuing to administer and co-ordinate programs for adults seeking to improve their literacy and essential skills, and/or obtain the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults through partnerships under the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL)
- continuing to work with the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning referring individuals that require academic upgrading as part of essential skills development
- distributing seniors' literacy resource kits to literacy co-ordinators around the province and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for seniors in the *Programs for Seniors* directory
- partnering with concerned others to address the lifelong learning needs of seniors in an urban, underdeveloped section of central Halifax

New Actions

- increase Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning's capacity and improve access to programs for adults seeking to improve their literacy and essential skills and/or acquire the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults
- enhance the literacy skills of Nova Scotia seniors using the seniors' literacy resource kit

Objective 5: Make education and training more relevant to the emerging skill needs of the learners and employers

Highlights of Activities Underway

- developing curriculum for new degree programs in management, water resources management, international rural development, rural studies, and technology education at Nova Scotia Agricultural College
- developing and revising of English (Adult Learning Program) and French (Formation générale des adultes) curriculum for the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning
- enhancing Nova Scotia Community College's capacity to have industry assist in program and curriculum development

- providing trade-relevant essential skills learning options for apprentices and trade qualifiers to support their success in the Apprenticeship Training Program and with trade certification
- conducting organizational needs assessments for business and industry to identify workforce training needs and options for addressing these needs
- helping displaced workers find new employment through the Workforce Skill Development Initiative that supports targeted initiatives and essential skills enhancement
- supporting the skill development of the current workforce through the award-winning Workplace Education Initiative, that helps employees manage change brought on by a rapidly changing workplace
- providing professional development and certification opportunities for workplace education instructors to customize essential skills programs to meet the needs of business, industry, and labour

New Actions

- review and enhance the Adult Learning Program Level III curriculum to ensure that the cross-cutting theme of employability is embedded in the outcomes
- organize Adult Learning Program Level III Focus Group in May 2004 to discuss transition/curriculum issues
- consult with delivery partners to determine strategies to enhance student success in transitions to the world of work or further studies
- provide financial support as a sponsor for the Skills Canada–Nova Scotia Energy Youth Quest events throughout the province
- create a video presentation on Nova Scotia's offshore energy sector to be delivered to secondary students throughout the province
- create a sector liaison program to facilitate sharing of labour market information and to develop customized responses to labour market challenges

Objective 6: Increase the post-secondary education and training system's capacity to respond to emerging labour market needs

Highlights of Activities Underway

- supporting groups such as Hypatia and the Women for Economic Equality Society in their work of improving the culture of educational institutions and workplaces to attract and retain women in science and trades and technology occupations
- funding the renovations and expansion throughout the 13 campuses of Nova Scotia Community College over the next five years

- continuing to develop articulation agreements for a range of courses between the Adult Learning Program and Nova Scotia Community College
- encouraging the continuation of university-based development centres that expose students and the community to entrepreneurship development activities and techniques

New Actions

- provide Nova Scotia Community College's Nautical Institute with $500,000 toward the purchase of a dynamic positioning simulator

Objective 7: Promote lifelong learning through the development of a learning culture

A lifelong learning culture is essential for success in today's economy. Skills Nova Scotia is addressing the needs with a practical, effective approach that is of real benefit to companies and individual employees.

Kay Crinean
Executive Director
NovaKnowledge

Highlights of Activities Underway

- participating in and supporting celebratory events, including International Family Literacy Day, Peter Gzowski Invitational (PGI) Golf Tournament, International Literacy Day, International Adult Learners' Week, and Word on the Street
- keeping pace with government's movement toward information and services on-line by supporting public libraries as key delivery points
- working with business and labour partners through Chambers of Commerce and NovaKnowledge to promote workplace learning as a primary strategy for addressing the skills requirements of our workforce
- encouraging an interest in biology, archaeology, geology, paleontology, culture, and heritage by providing a comprehensive schedule of Nova Scotia-specific exhibits and interpretive programs through the Nova Scotia Museum
- increasing accessibility of provincial and community heritage resources and genealogy information available on-line through the Nova Scotia Museum and Public Archives to promote educational resources and opportunities for Nova Scotians

New Actions

- promote with employers the benefits of human resource development, employment equity, lifelong learning, and best practices
- expand partnership with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to place Service Nova Scotia kiosks in public libraries across the province
- support the XYZ Community-Based Literacy Conference in Antigonish
- draft an Individual Career and Development Plan Form and Guidebook and initiate a Head Office Lunch 'n' Learn Program Pilot for the *Planning for Progress: Training and Development Program*

Conclusion

The *Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2003–2004* builds on the work of 2002–2003 to develop the skills, supports, and systems necessary to achieve a world-class workforce ready to meet the challenges of today and the promise of tomorrow. The vision is being achieved through the hard work and co-operation of all partners.

Next steps

Premier's Forum on Skills

The Premier's Forum on Skills, to be held in 2003–2004, will provide an opportunity for labour market partners to discuss common issues, seek solutions, and set priorities for action in 2004–2005.

Release of the Second Annual Skills Nova Scotia Progress Report

The government's second annual report, to be released in 2004, will detail our progress, allow us to make necessary adjustments, and build a foundation for future directions.

Release of the Action Plan 2004–2005

The government's third annual action plan, to be released in 2004, will build on existing actions and identify new opportunities to achieve the goals and objectives.